

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE
Office of the Spokesman

For Immediate Release
2005/701

July 14, 2005

MEDIA NOTE

Worldwide Business Visa Center Opens July 15, 2005

The Department of State is pleased to announce the latest step in our ongoing effort to better facilitate the issuance of visas for legitimate business travelers worldwide. As of July 15, the U.S.-China Business Initiative, which began as a pilot program in January, will expand into a new Business Visa Center available to assist businesses in the United States and their partners, customers and colleagues around the world.

The Business Visa Center assists American businesses by explaining the visa process when they invite employees or current and prospective business clients and partners to the United States. This involves providing information to U.S. companies about the application process for visas for those seeking to travel to the U.S. for business purposes. The Business Visa Center will work with both the companies and the consular officers, when needed, to communicate information effectively between U.S. businesses and the embassies and consulates worldwide.

The Bureau of Consular Affairs will continue to maintain the list of "Upcoming Conferences" to be held in the United States on our Intranet. This list is for conferences in the U.S. that expect a large number of foreign visitors where Visa Services has received notification by the U.S. organizer of the event. The list not only provides Consular officers around the world with information on the event, but may also include a list of event participants when one is provided by the event coordinator.

Both the Business Visa Center and conference list can be reached via e-mail at: BusinessVisa@state.gov. The phone number is (202) 663-3198.

Improved information for businesses and the public, in the form of up-to-date details about wait times for interviews and processing times, is available on most embassy web sites and the travel.state.gov web site. This information allows business travelers to better prepare for their interview and better plan their trip.

Whether at our more than 200 embassies or consulates abroad, or here in the United States, the Bureau of Consular Affairs continues its work to support business-related travel to the U.S. The new Business Visa Center is one more way the Department of State is actively supporting international business travel, U.S. commerce and the U.S. economy.

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